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is well executed. Nevertheless, controversy and interdisciplinary approaches are self-evidently not the first objectives of a Committee that still is working on the difficult task of constructing a common narrative. Opening up to new approaches in the historical sciences may be an important and final step for the German-Czech and German-Slovak Committee of Historians.

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Reese, Roger R. *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought: The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II*. Modern War Studies. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2011. xxi + 386 pp. Map. Illustrations. Notes. Selected bibliography. Index. \$37.50.

THE Red Army's military effectiveness in World War Two can only be explained by beginning to understand the motivations of individual soldiers at foxhole-level. This is the starting premise of Roger R. Reese's excellent study of the Red Army's performance in World War Two. Utilizing a wealth of archival material and personal testimony, in the form of soldiers' letters, diaries, memoirs and oral testimony, Reese brings alive the complex web of motivations Soviet citizens had for fighting, and continuing to fight, in the face of enormous casualties, horrific conditions and crushing defeats. Why Soviet soldiers waged war in the face of such adversity, in the name of a political system which had victimized so many, and how the Red Army succeeded in defeating the German army, have been asked before. Yet, Reese succeeds in offering new answers and insights into these problems, painting a picture of the Red Army as a much more effective fighting force than commonly appreciated.

Although the book's preface unconventionally recommends that the reader begin with its conclusions, the opening chapter nevertheless remains an important introduction to Reese's definition of military effectiveness and his approach to his sources. Particular attention is paid to how individuals remember and express their war experiences, as well as the ways in which wartime propaganda and an official war memory have shaped individual memories. Reese stresses the limitations of oral histories as evidence, in particular the manner in which veterans internalized the state's interpretation of war. The book's twelve chapters make extensive use of interviews, particularly from the Harvard Interview Project and the 'I Remember' ('Ja pomniu') website: <<http://www.iremember.ru>>. However, Reese succeeds in filtering out veterans' nostalgia and wartime and post-war propaganda myths. Indeed, the wealth of personal testimony, including from women and national minorities, eloquently supports Reese's arguments and humanizes the common soldier.

Chapter two offers an original reassessment of the Red Army's performance in the Winter War. Reese challenges the established view that war with Finland

was a complete disaster, arguing that despite great inefficiency the Red Army remained an effective fighting force. Morale never entirely collapsed despite heavy casualties and poor combat performance. 'Overall, the military's staying power proved robust; soldiers kept fighting, and regiments remained cohesive' (p. 54). The Red Army's resilience in 1939 and 1940, therefore, hinted at its resilience during the Great Patriotic War. Chapters three and four re-examine the Red Army's effectiveness during the battles of encirclement in 1941, and why so many soldiers found themselves in captivity. Reese attributes the defeats of 1941 not to the ineffectiveness of rank-and-file troops, but failures in command and military doctrine. He does not rule out the rejection of Stalinism as an explanation for capture, but stresses that most men fought until, and even after, their positions became hopeless.

The mobilization of society for armed service is the subject of chapters five and six. They explore why some individuals and sections of society volunteered for armed service, whilst others, especially non-Slavic national and ethnic minorities, waited for conscription. Here Reese provides a complicated picture of Soviet citizens' varied responses to the call to arms. The book's largest section, approximately one hundred pages, explores how the state and army sustained morale and motivated combatants, as well as the circumstances when military effectiveness collapsed. Ideology, propaganda, leadership, the primary group, discipline, hatred and material rewards are explored in detail. The re-examination of the Red Army's use of coercion is particularly important. Reese argues that, 'Blocking detachments were never given carte blanche to execute soldiers' (p. 164), and penal battalions although dangerous, 'were not suicide units, and service in them was always brief' (p. 165). Chapters eleven and twelve deal with the historical precedents, motivations for and experience of female military service. Although women's service motivations often paralleled those of men, this section explores the possibility of gender-based responses as well as the specific contributions of women to military effectiveness.

Reese concludes that although morale and motivation fluctuated dramatically, the Red Army remained militarily effective, despite its inefficiencies. Soviet soldiers fought for many reasons, including a genuine sense of patriotism. The coercive power of the Stalinist party-state, however, was less important in motivating combat and achieving military effectiveness. Most specialists in Russian history will find much that is familiar in this well written and carefully-researched study, but there is much that is also original and surprising. A map with clearer shading might have been of greater assistance to general readers, but this is a minor criticism. *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought* deserves to be read widely, particularly by undergraduates studying the Soviet war effort in World War Two.